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Policy issues

Implementation of decisions adopted by the governing body at previous sessions

Governing Council decision 27/3 on international water quality guidelines for ecosystems

Report of the Executive Director

Summary

At its twenty-seventh session, held in February 2013, the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum of the United Nations Environment Programme recognized the need for international water quality guidelines which could be voluntarily used by Governments to maintain and improve the status of ecosystems to sustain the services they provide, as a possible basis for managing water pollution and water quality, as they affect ecosystems, and to support decision-making.

Accordingly, in its decision 27/3, the Governing Council requested the Executive Director, in partnership with Governments and other stakeholders, to develop international water quality guidelines for ecosystems, taking into account existing information; encouraged Governments, scientific institutions, United Nations agencies and other relevant organizations to participate actively in developing the water quality guidelines; invited Governments and others to technically and financially support the process for the development of international water quality guidelines; and requested the Executive Director to report to the United Nations Environment Assembly on the implementation of decision 27/3.

The present report provides detailed information on the implementation of Governing Council decision 27/3.

* UNEP/EA.1/1.

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I. Overview

A. Develop international water quality guidelines for ecosystems, taking into account existing information (operative paragraph 1 of decision 27/3)

1. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) secured the services of the United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security to undertake the initial in-depth scientific research required for the development of international water quality guidelines for ecosystems and to compile an initial draft of the guidelines. The Institute established a drafting team, drawing scientific input and assistance from the Global Water System Project (GWSP) network of scientists and entities such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Water Education (IHE). The drafting team undertook an extensive review of the literature and an analysis of existing information in order to inform the formulation of the conceptual approach. Possible parameters and indicators were presented for consideration and discussion in various forums.

2. UNEP, within the framework of UN-Water, the United Nations system-wide mechanism for achieving coherence and coordination in the water-related activities of the relevant agencies and programmes of the United Nations system, is rolling out two complementary initiatives contributing to the development of the guidelines as follows:

(a) Existing innovative water quality guidelines at the global, regional, national and catchment area levels are being collected, analysed and compiled into a global compendium on water quality guidelines with the support of the International Water Association (IWA) and inputs from Governments and various other stakeholders. The compendium will inform the development of the guidelines, providing information on existing guidelines, including on the methodological approaches, parameters, indicators and thresholds adopted and in use.

(b) The second world water quality assessment report is being compiled with the support of the Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research, based on databases such as the UNEP Global Environment Monitoring System/Water Programme (GEMS/Water), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Aquastat database, and input from Governments, regional institutions and other stakeholders. The assessment will present the state of water quality globally, highlighting policy options for protecting or restoring water quality so that water systems continue providing services such as food production and water supply to society. The assessment will provide information on parameters, indicators and possible threshold values for consideration in the development of the guidelines.

3. UNEP has recently completed a report which has the potential to further contribute to the development of the guidelines. The report, *The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) for Water and Wetlands*, was produced by TEEB – a UNEP initiative – in partnership with the Institute for European Environmental Policy and sets out important challenges for water quality accounting, such as the lack of a standard and harmonized methodology (making comparison at the local, national or international levels difficult), coupled with a lack of appropriate and sufficient data or indicators. The report concludes that in many cases the value of wetlands remains invisible to decision makers, contributing to their continued degradation. Wetlands play a critical role in the water cycle and are therefore of fundamental importance for water quality management.

4. Interim deliverables from the above-mentioned initiatives were presented for peer review at a number of key regional and international meetings, including the GWSP conference on "Water in the Anthropocene: challenges for science and governance" (Bonn, Germany, 21–24 May 2013); Stockholm World Water Week 2013 (Stockholm, 1–6 September 2013); the Budapest Water Summit (Budapest, 8–11 October 2013); and the third IWA Development Congress and Exhibition (Nairobi, 14–17 October 2013). Participants in these meetings provided extensive input for and recommendations on developing the guidelines.

5. The Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP was briefed on the progress made in the development of the guidelines on 26 November 2013. As a result of the recommendations received, the secretariat was requested to carry out further work on the conceptual approach to the guidelines, to clarify their scope and the process for their development, including funding, and to consider strengthening the involvement of UN-Water, UNESCO-IHE and the secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention). The Committee took note of the terms of reference for the development of the guidelines and the process being undertaken by the secretariat to establish an advisory group to provide

information, data and experiences essential for drafting the guidelines and to review draft versions of the guidelines and advise the secretariat during their development.

6. The first interim progress report on the development of the guidelines was prepared on the basis of the initial research and analysis and taking into account the inputs and recommendations provided in various consultative forums. It proposes a conceptual approach, indicators and parameters that may be used by member States to develop specific standards relevant to their respective geographic and social conditions taking into account local knowledge. The report includes an annotated table of contents for the preliminary draft guidelines. In this phase of development, the proposed guidelines will focus on surface water ecosystems and their interlinkages with groundwater and coastal zones and will be developed in more detail in subsequent phases. The first interim progress report on developing the guidelines is being circulated to Governments and key stakeholders, including the UNEP-DHI Centre for Water and Environment, the multilateral environmental agreements and United Nations entities, for their comments and, together with such further input, is intended to serve as the basis for the continued development of the guidelines.

B. Governments, scientific institutions, United Nations agencies and other relevant organizations to participate actively in developing the water quality guidelines for ecosystems (operative paragraph 2 of decision 27/3)

7. UNEP is establishing an advisory group, whose membership will comprise policymakers and technical experts of high standing, to provide guidance and advice to the secretariat in the development of the guidelines. Over 30 Governments had responded positively to the invitation by the secretariat to nominate candidates for the advisory group by the deadline of 31 January 2014. The advisory group will be invited to review and provide comments on the first interim progress report on the development of the guidelines and its outputs.

8. UNEP is strengthening its collaboration with other United Nations entities, relevant multilateral environmental agreements and organizations. A memorandum of understanding between UNEP and UNESCO is being finalized which explicitly highlights their collaboration on the development of the guidelines. Collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) has been strengthened with the recent UN-Water decision that WHO will co-chair the UN-Water task force on wastewater management together with UNEP and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). The Ramsar Convention secretariat has been invited to contribute to the development of the guidelines and to comment on the first interim progress report. Technical experts from many institutions from developing and developed countries and United Nations entities, including UNESCO-IHE, are involved in the drafting team providing support to the United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security in its analytical work.

9. UNEP is using its position as chair of the UN-Water thematic priority area on water quality, to keep UN-Water members informed of progress in developing the guidelines and to seek their input and engagement. The private sector and other stakeholders are kept informed and involved through the engagement of professional network organizations like IWA and the presentation of interim deliverables in various forums.

10. The development of the web-based platform known as "UNEP Live" has progressed significantly since the adoption of decision 27/3 in February 2013. It provides a unique opportunity for streamlining data management and access and will be a crucial platform for member States and other stakeholders to share information on the environment, including water quality. It is intended to be an important source of existing information in the development of the guidelines.

C. Governments and others to technically and financially support the process for the development of international water quality guidelines for ecosystems (operative paragraph 3 of decision 27/3)

11. UNEP has engaged Governments and agencies in bilateral discussions, through letters and email communication, to solicit information on existing guidelines for ecosystems and other water uses and water quality data in their water systems, for use in the compilation of a global compendium on water quality guidelines and the second world water quality assessment report respectively. The responses in that regard have been encouraging.

12. Requests have been sent to Governments and agencies to solicit financial support for the development of the guidelines, especially for the regional and global consultation processes to be held in 2015. Follow-up discussions are ongoing with a number of Governments and interested partners.

D. Report to the United Nations Environment Assembly on the implementation of decision 27/3 (operative paragraph 4 of decision 27/3)

13. The draft guidelines are expected to be produced by December 2014 and they will then be subjected to extensive regional and international consideration and consultation processes in 2015. The final draft international water quality guidelines for ecosystems are envisaged to be ready for submission to the United Nations Environment Assembly at its second session.

14. All interim deliverables, including the first interim progress report on the development of the guidelines, are available from the UNEP website (http://www.unep.org/esm/WaterEcosystems.aspx). Further information, including on upcoming activities, will be made available on the website.

II. Achievements

15. The achievements in the activities to develop the guidelines to date include strengthened recognition and understanding of the need for such guidelines at the international level as demonstrated by the nomination of policy and technical experts to contribute to the development of the guidelines by over 50 Governments from both developing and developed countries, and the establishment of key partnerships with United Nations entities and other individuals and entities from developing and developed countries (water associations, universities, renowned experts, etc.) to support the process.

16. In addition, the first interim progress report summarizes the findings of the extensive review of the literature; the proposed broadly peer-reviewed conceptual framework for the guidelines includes a clear development process; and significant progress has been made with regard to defining the outline of the guidelines.

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Implementation of decisions adopted by the governing body at previous sessions

Governing Council decision 27/4 on the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

Report of the Executive Director

Summary

At its twenty-seventh session, held in Nairobi in February 2013, the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) adopted decision 27/4 on the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. As requested in decision 27/4, the present report provides the status of implementation of that decision.

In addition to an overview of the implementation of Governing Council decision 27/4, the present report sets out a summary of key decisions adopted by the Plenary of the Platform at its second session, held in Antalya, Turkey, from 9 to 14 December 2013, and a brief report on relevant activities undertaken during the first quarter of 2014.

Since the establishment of the Platform in April 2012, and the intersessional process leading up to the first session of the Plenary of the Platform in January 2013, UNEP has provided support for the establishment of procedures to assist Governments and other stakeholders to implement the Platform's work, and for the development of the Platform's work programme.

At its second session, the Plenary of the Platform adopted an ambitious initial work programme for the Platform for 2014–2018, and a strong commitment to its implementation was demonstrated by pledges totalling more than half of the total five-year budget for 2014–2018 (with over $18 million received and over $7 million pledged).

The operationalization of the Platform has provided an opportunity for innovation in the science-policy interface on biodiversity and ecosystem services, including through the Platform's recognition of the importance of indigenous and local knowledge, and the strong emphasis in its work programme on capacity-building and ensuring that the best available information on biodiversity and ecosystem services is provided to decision makers in accordance with their needs.

* UNEP/EA.1/1.

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I. Overview

1. The present report sets out information on the implementation of Governing Council decision 27/4, on a paragraph-by-paragraph basis, up to 31 January 2014.

1. Authorizes the Executive Director, within available resources, to provide the secretariat and administrative arrangements in responding to decision IPBES/1/4, including the secondment of a professional officer to the Platform secretariat

2. Building on the interim secretariat arrangements put in place by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in 2012, at its first session, the Plenary of the Platform requested UNEP to provide the Platform's secretariat and invited UNEP to provide administrative arrangements for the Platform's secretariat in accordance with the rules of UNEP. To that end, and in response to Governing Council decision 27/4, UNEP continued to provide the services of the Platform's secretariat, in accordance with the decisions adopted at the first session of its Plenary. The secretariat has provided support to the intersessional process in preparation for the second session of the Plenary of the Platform with support from the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC). During the intersessional period, the secretariat has provided administrative and technical support contributing to the following milestones in preparation for the second session of the Plenary:

(a) Initial gathering of the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel, held at UNEP-WCMC in Cambridge, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, in March 2013, with support from the Government of Australia, which provided the basis for the Panel to work as a team;

(b) First full meetings of the Panel and the Bureau, hosted in Bergen, Norway, from 2 to 6 June 2013, by the Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management, at which they agreed on their working modalities, established the work required and allocated responsibilities for that work in the intersessional period;

(c) Expert workshop on the contribution of indigenous and local knowledge systems to the Platform convened by the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel in Tokyo from 9 to 11 June 2013, hosted by the Ministry of Environment, Japan, and organized jointly by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations University, which provided the basis for further work by the Platform on indigenous and local knowledge;

(d) Open online review by Governments and other stakeholders over a six-week period in June and July 2013 of a number of documents being prepared for the second session of the Plenary of the Platform, which provided the opportunity for Governments and other stakeholders to contribute to the development of procedures and the draft work programme of the Platform;

(e) Latin America and the Caribbean regional consultation meeting held in Sao Paulo, Brazil, from 11 to 13 July 2013, organized jointly by UNEP and the Sao Paulo Research Foundation, which strengthened engagement in the region;

(f) Pan-European stakeholder meeting held in Leipzig, Germany, from 16 to 18 July 2013, organized by the Network-Forum for Biodiversity Research Germany and other European national biodiversity platforms, which strengthened engagement in the region;

(g) Africa regional consultation meeting held in Nairobi from 22 to 24 July 2013, with support from the Government of Norway, which strengthened engagement in the region;

(h) Eastern Europe regional consultation meeting held in Budapest and Tihany, Hungary, from 31 July to 2 August 2013, hosted by the Centre for Ecological Research of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences with support from the Hungarian Ministry of Rural Development, which strengthened engagement in the region;

(i) Expert workshop on the conceptual framework for the Platform held in Cape Town, South Africa, on 25 and 26 August 2013, with support from the Governments of Japan, South Africa and the United Kingdom, which provided the basis for the proposed conceptual framework recommended by the Panel;

(j) Second full meetings of the Panel and the Bureau held in Cape Town, South Africa, from 27 to 31 August 2013, hosted by the Government of South Africa with support from the Government of Norway, at which the preparations for the second session of the Plenary of the Platform were finalized;

(k) Asia-Pacific regional consultation meeting held in Kuala Lumpur on 3 November 2013, organized jointly by the Malaysia Industry-Government Group for High Technology and the Office of the Science Adviser, supported by the Norwegian Environment Agency, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Malaysia, and UNEP-WCMC, in conjunction with an informal consultation on the Platform and capacity-building, which was held in Kuala Lumpur from 4 to 6 November 2013, which strengthened engagement in the region and provided further clarity on the possible scope of the Platform's capacity-building activities;

(l) The recruitment process for the positions approved by the Plenary of the Platform was initiated during 2013, with one staff member being recruited to the Platform secretariat in Bonn during the year. Seven further positions were advertised during 2013, including the Head of the Platform's secretariat. The successful recruitment of Ms. Anne Larigauderie to that position was announced at the second session of the Plenary of the Platform and Ms. Larigauderie took up her position in Bonn on 4 February 2014. The remaining six positions of the Platform-funded secretariat are in the final stages of recruitment and the recruitment process for the UNEP secondment of a professional officer is under way. UNEP is working to ensure a smooth handover and transition from the interim secretariat team operating in Nairobi to the Platform's secretariat hosted in Bonn.

2. Requests the Executive Director, in accordance with decision I/4, to enter into a collaborative partnership with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the United Nations Development Programme, for consideration by the Platform plenary, in order to enter into an institutional link with the Platform and its secretariat.

3. The Executive Director, in accordance with decision IPBES/1/4, was requested to enter into a collaborative partnership with UNESCO, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The four United Nations entities jointly prepared and submitted for the consideration of the Plenary at its second session a draft collaborative partnership arrangement. At its second session, the Plenary approved the collaborative partnership arrangement to establish an institutional link between these entities as set out in the annex to decision IPBES-2/8. In the decision, the Plenary invited each of the four United Nations entities to approve the collaborative partnership arrangement.

3. Authorizes the Executive Director:

(a) To finalize a host country agreement with the Government of Germany for the presence of the Platform secretariat in Bonn;

(b) To make those arrangements necessary for the secretariat of the Platform to operate, with a view to having a functioning secretariat, at the latest, by the end of the second session of the Plenary.

4. The Government of Germany and UNEP have agreed on hosting arrangements for the Platform secretariat in Bonn. Under the arrangements, the secretariat is covered on an ad interim basis under the existing arrangements in place for the UNEP-administered secretariat of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals. The staff of the Platform's secretariat will therefore enjoy the privileges and immunities accorded under the overall agreement between the Government of Germany and the United Nations Volunteers programme, which is mandated by the Secretary-General of the United Nations to serve as the administrative umbrella for all United Nations entities in Bonn. As reported above, the secretariat was established in Bonn in 2013 and the transition of the functions of the Platform's secretariat from Nairobi to Bonn will be completed in 2014. In addition to the administrative hosting services, and along with support from UNESCO, FAO and UNDP, UNEP will continue to provide broader programmatic and administrative support to the Platform's secretariat as envisaged in the collaborative partnership arrangement.

4. Requests the Executive Director to continue to receive financial contributions that are provided for the Platform, until the Platform's trust fund is established;

5. In its decision IPBES-2/7 on financial and budgetary arrangements, the Plenary requested UNEP to establish a trust fund for the Platform as set out in option 2.B. in paragraph 19 (b) of the note by the secretariat on options for the trust fund (IPBES/2/6) and to transfer any fund balance from the interim fund structure to the new trust fund as of 1 January 2014. Accordingly, the trust fund for the Platform is currently being established by UNEP, and all remaining funds held in the interim fund structure by UNEP

as at 1 January 2014, along with additional funds received from 1 January 2014, will be transferred into the Platform's dedicated trust fund once it has been established and is operational.

6. As at the end of March 2014, UNEP had received a total of $18,353,346 in cash, including $3,376,128 in cash received during 2012, $13,415,734 in cash received during 2013 and $1,561,484 in cash received by the end of March 2014. An additional $7,745,676 has been pledged for the period 2014-2018.

5. Requests the Executive Director to submit input and suggestions, following the procedures and guidance agreed by the Platform Plenary, and based on the findings of the fifth Global Environment Outlook report, to inform the development of the initial work programme of the Platform.

7. United Nations bodies related to biodiversity and ecosystem services were invited by the Plenary at its first session to submit inputs and suggestions, as determined by their respective governing bodies, to inform the development of the initial work programme of the Platform. To that end and as requested by the Governing Council in its decision 27/4, UNEP submitted a selection of inputs and suggestions. The suggestions included elements related to a foresight process (horizon scanning) for biodiversity and ecosystem services; a comprehensive global assessment on the status and trends in biodiversity and ecosystem services and the consequences of changes therein for human well-being; a regional assessment for Africa; establishing a data centre or data management approach such that data brought together and used within global and regional assessments can be made available to the global research and policy communities; promoting novel approaches to the mapping and modelling of biodiversity and ecosystem services; promoting the mapping and modelling of the spatial and temporal distribution of pressures on and threats to biodiversity; supporting the work to measure the achievement of the 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets; and a strong emphasis on communicating the science and other work of the Platform. The submissions by UNEP provided an opportunity to inform the Platform on UNEP priorities, including those resulting from the fifth Global Environment Outlook report assessment process.

6. Also requests the Executive Director to report on the implementation of the present decision to the governing body of the United Nations Environment Programme at its next session.

8. The present document provides the requisite report on the implementation of decision 27/4. The United Nations Environment Assembly may wish to consider the usefulness of regular reporting on the status of the Platform and implementation of relevant decisions at its future sessions.

II. Summary of key decisions adopted by the Plenary of the Platform at its second session

9. At its second session, the Plenary of the Platform adopted a number of key decisions, including:

(a) Decision IPBES-2/5, on the work programme for the period 2014–2018, sets out an initial work programme for the Platform for the next five years, supported by a strong commitment to its implementation through existing pledges totalling more than half ($25.4 million) of the total $43.5 million budget required for the five-year work programme. The work programme deliverables cover all four functions of the Platform: capacity-building, knowledge generation, assessment and policy support. In addition, the conceptual framework was also adopted in decision IPBES-2/4 as presented by the interim Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and will form the basic common ground for the Platform's work;

(b) Decision IPBES-2/3, on procedures for the Platform's deliverables, sets out procedures which provide clear means for implementing the work programme for the period 2014–2018, with some outstanding procedures to be considered further in the future, for example those relating to the use of local and indigenous knowledge;

(c) Decision IPBES-2/1, on amendments to the rules of procedure for the Plenary with regard to rules governing the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel, sets out procedures for the nomination and selection of members of the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel, which will be used as the basis for the selection of the Panel's members for a three-year period by the next session of the Plenary;

(d) Decision IPBES-2/8, on a collaborative partnership arrangement to establish an institutional link between the Plenary and the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the

United Nations and the United Nations Development Programme, provides a framework for collaboration between the four United Nations entities and the Plenary in support of the Platform and its Secretariat; and

(e) Decision IPBES-2/7, on financial and budgetary arrangements, includes an agreement that UNEP shall establish and manage the Platform's trust fund.

10. The report of the second session of the Plenary of the Platform (IPBES/2/17) and related decisions is available in the six official languages of the United Nations from the Platform's website: www.ipbes.net. In addition, the implementation of the work programme 2014–2018 is under way and further details on the schedule and upcoming activities are also available on the Platform's website. It is anticipated that the third session of the Platform's Plenary will be held in Bonn, Germany, in January 2015.

Report on the implementation of the Platform's work programme from January to April 2014

11. Following the successful outcome of the second session of the Plenary of the Platform, the third meetings of the Platform's Bureau and Multidisciplinary Expert Panel were held in Bonn, Germany, from 10 to 14 March 2014, with the objective of planning and initiating the next steps for the implementation of the Platform's work programme in 2014.

12. Key issues which were discussed and agreed upon by the Bureau and the Panel include:

(a) Overall time schedule for work programme implementation in 2014 and the respective responsibilities of the Panel and Bureau members;

(b) The in-kind offers for technical support units for task forces and expert groups to support the implementation of the work programme, of which five were accepted;

(c) The process for the nomination and selection of members of the Panel, which was agreed upon and will be communicated to all Governments in due course.

(d) The next steps for the implementation of the Platform's work programme deliverables for 2014, including:

(i) Selection of experts for eight deliverables (task forces for capacity-building, indigenous and local knowledge, and data and knowledge; expert groups on guide to assessments, scoping of the conceptualization of values, and policy support tools and methodologies; assessment groups for pollination, and scenarios analysis and modelling). Over 1,000 nominations were received from Governments and stakeholders and 300 experts were selected in accordance with the criteria and procedures adopted by the Plenary;

(ii) Planning for the next steps for the above-mentioned deliverables; and

(iii) Planning for the deliverables on outreach and stakeholder engagement and the review of the Platform's effectiveness and efficiency.

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Governing Council decision 27/5 on coordination across the United Nations system, including the Environment Management Group

Report of the Executive Director

Summary

Pursuant to Governing Council decision 27/5, on coordination across the United Nations system, including the Environment Management Group, the present document provides a progress report on the work of the Environment Management Group, including its issue-specific and technical groups.

The report presents information on the Group's activities and achievements in enhancing coherence in programming environmental activities, mainstreaming environment and enhancing sustainability in policies, programmes and management practices in the United Nations system. It also sets out the Group's strategic approach and provides an overview of the direction of its future work as approved by the senior officials of the Group at their nineteenth meeting.

* UNEP/EA.1/1.

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I. Summary of the outputs of the Environment Management Group and progress made in 2012–2013

1. In accordance with Governing Council decision 27/5, the present report sets out progress in the work of the Environment Management Group, including its issue-specific and technical groups, as reviewed by its members. In undertaking its work, the Group, through its chair, the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), has continued its close cooperation with the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and its subsidiary bodies to ensure that environmental issues are brought to the highest level of coordination and management in the United Nations system for further follow up and implementation. A summary of the Group's achievements and outputs in 2012–2013 include:

(a) Preparation of a United Nations system-wide mapping tool containing key functions, tools, indicators and decisions of the United Nations system entities in support of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 submitted to the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice of the Convention on Biological Diversity in October 2013. The mapping tool has been transferred to the Convention's secretariat for integration in the Convention's clearing house mechanism for further use and maintenance. Consultations are under way on a system-wide contribution to the mid-term review of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and on how to support the integration of the Targets into national-level strategies and planning tools such as the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs);

(b) Preparation of a United Nations system-wide action plan for coordinated action in the drylands presented to the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa at its eleventh session held in Windhoek in September 2013. The action plan was submitted to the Convention for follow-up on its implementation with interested United Nations entities and other partners in selected pilot regions;

(c) Preparation of a stocktaking catalogue of existing United Nations system-wide green economy toolkits and methodologies, including options for making these accessible to member States and other stakeholders. Consultation is ongoing on enhancing the coordination of United Nations activities on green economy, including through initiatives such as the Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE);

(d) Establishment of an issue management group on the sound management of chemicals and wastes engaging a broad range of United Nations entities to raise the priority accorded to chemicals management in the United Nations system and to provide a coordinated inter-agency contribution to the formulation of the sustainable development goals. The issue management group, in cooperation with the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC), aims to promote the integration of chemicals management issues into the broader context of economic and social policies and to facilitate more effective support by United Nations entities to countries in their efforts to achieve the 2020 goals;

(e) Continuation of the consultative process for advancing environmental and social sustainability in the United Nations system, including the preparation of an interim guide to assist United Nations entities in piloting and implementing the framework for advancing environmental and social sustainability in the United Nations system. Further consultation is under way to assess the legal, institutional and management implications of sustainability measures for the United Nations entities, the role of various United Nations bodies in follow-up to and implementation of the framework, as well as mechanisms for sharing knowledge and capacity-building and reporting on sustainability issues to relevant forums;

(f) Continued consultation with and provision of technical support through the UNEP "Sustainable United Nations" initiative to United Nations entities in enhancing environmental management of their facilities and operations. This includes the preparation of the fifth edition of the report entitled, *Moving Towards a Climate Neutral UN*, which provides data on greenhouse gas emissions from 64 United Nations entities for 2012 and case studies on emissions reduction efforts. Good progress has been achieved on a systematic approach to emissions reductions in 2013. Following a proposal by the Environment Management Group, the Chief Executives Board and its High-level Committee on Management are committed to developing and implementing environmentally sustainable management in a gradual and voluntary manner and to achieving measurable progress in enhancing sustainability in their operations with a focus on facility management and procurement;

(g) Launch of a peer-review process to review the environment portfolio and management procedures of United Nations entities, building on the accumulated international experience in organizations such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and based on voluntary participation, mutual trust among peers, and non-binding recommendations. The process started with a review on a pilot basis of the environmental management profiles of the World Meteorological Organization, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and UNEP and sharing of lessons learned. The final peer-review reports on the above agencies are due in September 2014. The peer-review mechanism is expected to provide significant multiple benefits for the UN system in enhancing transparency and accountability, consistency and coherence, and credibility and exemplarity. In addition, it is hoped that the process promotes effectiveness (in achieving assigned environmental, social and economic sustainability objectives) and resource efficiency.

II. Background

2. In its decision 27/5, the Governing Council at its first universal session, expressed appreciation for the progress report prepared under the guidance of the senior officials of the Environment Management Group at their eighteenth meeting and as presented by the Executive Director, including the strategic considerations of the Group in supporting the implementation of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, "The future we want",[1] as well as its contribution to the post-2015 development agenda.

3. The Council encouraged the Group to continue to promote coherence in programming environmental activities in the United Nations system, in close cooperation with the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and its subsidiary bodies and requested the Executive Director in his capacity as Chair of the Group to submit a progress report on the Group's work to the next session of the governing body of the United Nations Environment Programme;

4. The present progress report may assist the United Nations Environment Assembly in performing its mandate as the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system and serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment. It may also assist the Environment Assembly in its deliberations on the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), in particular on enhancing the voice of UNEP and its ability to fulfil its coordination mandate within the United Nations system.[2]

5. The nineteenth meeting of the senior officials of the Group was held on 19 September 2013 and was co-chaired by Mr. Achim Steiner, Executive Director of UNEP and Chair of the Environment Management Group, and Ms. Rebeca Grynspan, Associate Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The co-chairs welcomed Mr. Mukhisa Kituyi, the newly appointed Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and Mr. Elliott Harris, the new Director of the UNEP New York office and the Environment Management Group secretariat. They expressed appreciation for the guidance received from the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum at its first universal session and requested the Chair to continue the practice of submitting a progress report by the Group to the United Nations Environment Assembly. The documentation for the nineteenth meeting is available from the Group's website (www.unemg.org).

III. Strategic views of the senior officials of the Environment Management Group on the future work of the Group in support of the implementation of the sustainable development agenda

6. At their nineteenth meeting, the senior officials of the Group considered the Group's progress report on work undertaken in 2013 and approved the Group's workplan for 2014–2015. In doing so, the senior officials provided the following strategic views for the future work of the Group:

(a) The Group possesses broad environmental expertise which benefits a large number of organizations. The issue-based and time-bound nature of the Group's work is an advantage as it allows a flexible response to emerging issues that require a coordinated response;

[1] General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex.

[2] Ibid, para. 88 (c).

(b) The Group, as a United Nations system-wide coordination body on environmental matters, holds significant potential and relevance for the follow-up process to Rio+20, supporting the post-2015 development agenda and advancing the environmental aspects of sustainability;

(c) An important role for the Group should be to ensure the involvement of the multilateral environmental agreements in the development and implementation of the post-2015 development agenda. The Group could also play a significant role in mainstreaming the environmental pillar of sustainable development throughout the United Nations system. Further, the Group should work to support the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development by delivering guidance for strategic policymaking and promoting a stronger science-policy interface;

(d) While the outcome of Rio+20 was identified as a guide for operational direction, the Group's members should take the opportunity to consider how to identify new environmental issues and topics that would benefit from a coordinated approach. A mechanism is needed to enable the collective and timely identification of topics and to help the Group become more outward looking and able to respond to needs as they arise;

(e) Recalling that the States Members of the United Nations, e.g., their Governments, authorities, public and private institutions, private sector and civil society, media and ultimately their citizens are the ultimate beneficiaries of the actions taken by the Environment Management Group, the relevance of considering country perspectives and needs when addressing new issues within the Group was highlighted. More focus should be put on the systematic scaling up of initiatives promoting a bottom-up approach in coherence with and the support of top-down approaches;

7. The senior officials also considered two new issues for future focus of the Group, namely a strategic approach to the sound management of chemicals and stocktaking of financing or funding for environment in the context of sustainable development. They agreed to establish an issue management group on the sound management of chemicals based on terms of reference proposed in consultation with IOMC. Regarding the issue of environmental funding or financing, the senior officials took note of the ongoing stocktake of financing for sustainable development being carried out by the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing. The senior officials agreed to await the outcome of the stocktake and revisit the issue at their next meeting.

IV. Enhanced coherence in programming environmental activities in the United Nations system, including mainstreaming

A. Issue management group on biodiversity

8. Following the publication of the Environment Management Group report *Advancing the biodiversity agenda: a UN system-wide contribution*, the Convention on Biological Diversity, at its eleventh meeting held in Hyderabad, India, from 8 to 19 October 2012,[3] highlighted the contribution of the Group's issue management group on biodiversity to mainstreaming the Aichi Biodiversity Targets throughout the United Nations system, welcomed its progress report on the contribution of the United Nations system to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and invited it to continue facilitating cooperation among its members in support of the implementation of the Strategic Plan and to provide a progress report for consideration by the Conference of the Parties at its twelfth meeting. At its first universal session in February 2013, in decision 27/5, the UNEP Governing Council invited the Group to continue facilitating cooperation among its members in support of the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

9. The issue management group on biodiversity held its eighth meeting on 30 May 2013 in the margins of the seventh Trondheim Conference on Biodiversity, held in Trondheim, Norway. The eighth meeting was co-chaired by the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The issue management group welcomed the paper prepared by the Convention on Biological Diversity entitled "The relevance of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and the Aichi Targets for the SDGs" as a good starting point that could feed into the preparations for the sustainable development goals and post-2015 development framework. The members of the issue management group agreed to highlight the Strategic Plan and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets in coordinated submissions through their entity focal points to the United Nations Task Team on the post-2015 development agenda. The issue management group also considered the online biodiversity mapping tool containing information on United Nations entities' key functions, tools, indicators and decisions in support of each of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. Following the suggestion of the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the

[3] Decision XI/6 on cooperation with other conventions, international organizations, and initiatives.

issue management group members expressed an interest in taking a leading or contributing role vis-à-vis one or more of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

10. At their nineteenth meeting, the senior officials of the Environment Management Group emphasized the importance of action at the national level and agreed that the issue management group on biodiversity should play a role in supporting the implementation of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets by helping to integrate them into national-level strategies and planning tools such as UNDAFs. They agreed to maintain the issue management group for another year, to present the online biodiversity mapping tool to the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice at its seventeenth meeting, to transfer the tool to the Convention on Biological Diversity for future maintenance and to make it available to Member States and other stakeholders. The senior officials agreed to contribute, as appropriate, to the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans Forum for the review and implementation of the national biodiversity strategies and action plans. They also agreed to contribute to the mid-term review process of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, including by providing indicators and data, in particular those relevant to the national-level implementation of the targets. The outcome of the issue management group's work will be presented in a progress report to the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity at its twelfth meeting to be held in October 2014.

B. Issue management group on land

11. The issue management group on land was established in 2009 to contribute to the implementation of the 10-year strategic plan of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. It produced an Environment Management Group report, *Global Drylands: A UN system-wide response*, which was submitted to the Conference of the Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification at its tenth session, held in Changwon, Republic of Korea, in October 2011. The mandate of the issue management group on land was extended by the senior officials of the Environment Management Group at their eighteenth meeting to enable it to prepare an action plan on the implementation of the global drylands report for consideration by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification at its eleventh session.

12. In its decision 27/5, the UNEP Governing Council encouraged the Environment Management Group to continue its support for the drylands agenda and preparation of a United Nations system-wide action plan on drylands. The action plan concept note was submitted to the Committee for the Review and Implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification at its eleventh session;[4] and an outline of the action plan was discussed by the issue management group at its fourth meeting held in Bonn, Germany, on 17 April 2013 in the margins of the eleventh session of the Committee for the Review and Implementation of the Convention. The final action plan for coordinated action in the drylands was submitted for the consideration of the senior officials of the Environment Management Group, the Committee for the Review and Implementation of the Convention at its twelfth session and the Conference of the Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification at its eleventh session.

13. The action plan focuses on implementation of the recommendations of the global drylands report through the identification of specific target areas in drylands within the national action plans in which effective collaboration between local, national and international mechanisms can attain measurable, time-framed and comparable concrete results in the reduction of degraded lands. The framework will be tested through a limited sample of specific target areas in drylands per geographical region, with a view to:

(a) Establishing a sample of geographically representative specific target areas in drylands within aligned national action plans and identifying relevant stakeholders;

(b) Selecting an initial set of specific target areas in drylands for the start-up phase of the action plan; and

(c) Establishing time-framed specific targets quantifying the reversal of land degradation.

14. At their nineteenth meeting, the senior officials approved the action plan and, in view of the accomplishment of its tasks, decided to conclude the work of the issue management work on land by the submission of the action plan to the Conference of the Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification at its eleventh session.

[4] The concept note was provided to the Committee for the Review and Implementation of the Convention in document ICCD/CRIC(11)/INF.5.

C. Issue management group on the green economy

15. The Environment Management Group inter-agency report on an inclusive green economy, *Working Towards a Balanced and Inclusive Green Economy: A United Nations System-wide Perspective*, published in December 2011, was the United Nations system's major contribution to Rio+20. A joint effort by 40 United Nations entities, the report facilitated a common understanding of the inclusive green economy approach and the key measures required for a transition to such an economy. It also assessed how the United Nations system could provide coherent technical advice and capacity development services to countries interested in embarking on inclusive green economy pathways.

16. In order to support and coordinate the implementation of the Rio+20 outcome document concerning the green economy, particularly paragraph 66, the senior officials of the Group at their eighteenth meeting in September 2012 extended the issue management group's term for another year in order to carry out two tasks, namely:

(a) To take stock of the existing United Nations system-wide web-based platforms and green economy resources, including toolkits, best practices, lessons learned and analytical evaluation and assessment methodologies, and provide suggestions on how these resources could be catalogued and made publicly available through an appropriate platform to better serve the Member States;

(b) Present options on how the work of the United Nations relating to the inclusive green economy could be better coordinated and placed within the United Nations system.

17. In implementing the first task, the issue management group prepared a stocktaking report on United Nations knowledge products on inclusive green economy providing an overview of the existing knowledge products and cataloguing their contents. This non-prescriptive report provides guidance to stakeholders on the use of resources, the application of various toolkits, and the steps to follow and tools to use in addressing particular issues, at different levels and across sectors. The report also looks into the means of implementation as well as the methodologies for measuring an inclusive green economy.

18. A potential second step could be to include the stocktaking report in an appropriate existing platform for accessing information on the inclusive green economy. Such a platform would include a resource library cataloguing, keeping track of, and updating the different knowledge products to make them more accessible to Governments and development practitioners.

19. In addressing the second task assigned to it by the senior officials, the issue management group considered that coordination was needed at global, regional, national and institutional levels. Coordination could also be differentiated by country-level operations (where the coordination role of the United Nations resident coordinator is crucial); methodological guidance (an area in which the Green Growth Knowledge Platform as well as PAGE aim to work in coordination); and global policy messaging (which has so far been coordinated through the issue management group via the Environment Management Group). In this regard, there was also a need to reflect on how the inclusive green economy approach could be mainstreamed in the United Nations system through the engagement of the Chief Executives Board.

20. At their nineteenth meeting, the senior officials further extended the term of the issue management group on the green economy in order to finalize the stocktaking report and identify options on how the information gathered can best be maintained. They also decided that the issue management group should prepare a paper on institutional options for enhanced United Nations system-wide support for inclusive green economy work for the consideration of the senior officials at their next meeting.

D. The new issue management group on the sound management of chemicals and waste

21. At its nineteenth meeting, the senior officials considered an issue paper on coherent support from the United Nations system to countries in order to achieve the sound management of chemicals and the establishment of an issue management group to address that issue. They agreed on the importance of raising the profile of sound chemicals management within all the relevant organizations of the United Nations system, including in the relevant entities beyond IOMC. The senior officials agreed to prepare terms of reference for the issue management group in close consultation with the IOMC. The issue management group was officially established on 7 February 2014 and held its first meeting on 14 February 2014 at which it approved its terms of reference and modalities of work. As its first task, the issue management group agreed to coordinate, consolidate and present in a coherent and integrated manner a set of common targets and indicators on the sound management of chemicals

agreed across a wide range of United Nations entities as an input to the deliberations of Member States on the sustainable development goals. The other tasks of the issue management group include the mapping of different agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system according to activities and initiatives that might assist in the achievement of the 2020 goal on chemicals of the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development; analysis of where and how the expertise of different agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system can contribute to supporting countries in achieving the 2020 goal on chemicals; and the provision of recommendations on how to achieve additional synergies between different agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system in terms of activities and initiatives that might assist in the achievement of the 2020 goal. The outcome of the issue management group's considerations are intended as a United Nations system-wide input to the preparations for the fourth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management, tentatively scheduled for late 2015, and other relevant forums. The issue management group will report on its progress to the senior officials at their twentieth meeting in September 2014.

V. Enhanced sustainability of policies, management practices and operations in the United Nations system

A. Consultations on advancing the framework for environmental and social sustainability in the United Nations system

22. A consultative process on environmental and social sustainability in the United Nations system was launched in 2009 to explore options for a possible system-wide approach to environmental and social sustainability to prevent and mitigate the unintended environmental and social impacts of United Nations operations and to look at associated opportunities in resource efficiency. A report entitled *A Framework for Advancing Environmental and Social Sustainability in the United Nations System* was endorsed by the senior officials at their seventeenth meeting in 2011, and submitted with a foreword by the Secretary-General to the Rio+20 process in 2012, as well as to the Chief Executives Board for Coordination.

23. The sustainability framework aims to ensure a minimum level of real engagement by all United Nations entities while allowing each entity to implement sustainability in a manner appropriate to its circumstances. The framework proposes: (a) a common vision, rationale and objective; (b) individual actions to be taken by each United Nations entity at policy, programme and management levels to internalize environmental and social sustainability measures; and (c) collective actions to be undertaken system-wide, such as a support and knowledge-sharing function, minimum requirements, and a centralized reporting structure.

24. At a retreat, held from 3 to 5 June 2013, participants in the consultative process discussed approaches for the implementation of the framework at the United Nations system-wide and individual entity levels; exchanged lessons learned; shared challenges in implementation; and identified follow-up options for the implementation of the sustainability framework across the United Nations system.

25. At their nineteenth meeting, the senior officials extended the consultative process in order to finalize a draft interim guide to assist entities to implement the framework. They also requested the Chair of the Environment Management Group to share an options paper on the system wide-issues related to the follow up of the framework with other United Nations system inter-agency bodies for their views and comments.

B. Issue management group on environmental sustainability management

26. The United Nations Chief Executives Board committed in 2007 to reducing the United Nations' climate footprint by approving a climate neutral strategy as proposed by the Environment Management Group. The Group and UNEP have since collaborated to support the United Nations system in implementing this strategy. In response to Member States' requests to integrate sustainable development considerations into the management of United Nations facilities and operations,[5] the Environment Management Group, serviced by the UNEP "Sustainable United Nations" initiative and the issue management group on environmental sustainability management, has focused its activities on:

[5] General Assembly resolutions 66/288, annex, and 67/226, para. 15.

(a) Obtaining a system-wide decision on environmental management systems; and

(b) Developing a workable framework of milestones to guide United Nations entities through emissions reduction strategies and environmental management systems.

27. Major highlights of the issue management group on environmental sustainability management in 2013 included:

(a) Climate neutral United Nations:

(i) The fourth common greenhouse gas inventory for the United Nations system, *Moving towards a climate neutral UN: the UN system's footprint and efforts to reduce it*, was published on 21 June 2013. The report included greenhouse gas emissions inventories for 63 United Nations entities for 2011, and described their emissions reduction efforts in 2012;

(ii) Issue management group members continued to make progress in the preparation of their emissions reduction strategies: 13 United Nations entities have an emissions reduction strategy approved by senior management, 5 organizations are climate neutral, and 5 have taken concrete steps towards the implementation of an environmental management system;

(iii) An online training course developed jointly by UNEP, the United Nations Office for Project Services, the International Labour Organization and its International Training Centre, "Buying for a better world: a guide on sustainable procurement for the UN system", was released and could provide a valid basis for sustainable public procurement in line with the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production patterns. The United Nations campaign "Greening the Blue" continued in 2013. Its website received an average of over 13,000 visits a month and has featured over 250 best practices of significant environmental measures from across the United Nations system;

(b) Inter-agency discussion on environmental sustainability management:

(i) UNEP has been leading sustainability management discussions in other United Nations inter-agency bodies. On behalf of the Environment Management Group, UNEP presented to the High-level Committee on Management at its spring session, held on 7 and 8 March 2013, a "Business case for environmental management systems in the United Nations" developed jointly by UNEP and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP). The related discussions resulted in decisions by the High-level Committee on Management and the Chief Executives Board to achieve measurable progress in the environmental performance of facilities and operations through the implementation of environmental management systems;

(ii) In the light of these important decisions, the Environment Management Group senior officials agreed at their nineteenth meeting to report on an annual basis to the High-level Committee on Management – through UNEP – on system-wide progress towards the development of environmental sustainability management. They also agreed that measurable progress to enhance the environmental sustainability of United Nations operations would be expressed in terms of progress against a series of milestones developed for the Environment Management Group and the High-level Committee on Management by the Sustainable United Nations initiative and the issue management group, rather than with reference to specific environmental indicators. Finally they committed to collaborate on the development of a common reporting service, based on the experience gained with the greenhouse gas inventory reporting, to enable entities to measure and report their environmental performance in a coherent manner.

C. Peer review of environmental profiles of the United Nations system

28. In 2011, the Environment Management Group established an approach for the peer review of the environment portfolio among its members, with a pilot phase during 2013–2014, for which the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) – on behalf of the United Nations entities based in the Vienna International Centre – volunteered, as did the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and UNEP. The pilot phase was designed to focus on corporate environmental management of facilities and operations, and builds on the accumulated experience of peer review of a variety of international organizations.

29. A peer review body was established to conduct the peer review on the basis of the reports drafted by the expert teams and the Environmental Management Group. The chosen themes cover a range of corporate environment management concerns: greenhouse gas emissions from buildings, facilities and air travel, typically standard across the reviews, together with a choice of two more themes from a range that includes waste management, information and communications technology and the greening of meetings, water management, and staff awareness, involvement and training. Each reviewed entity chose themes with regard to which they had accomplishments to present, as well as themes relating to areas in which they needed to make progress. The boundary for the reviews varies significantly.

30. The first meeting of the peer review body consisting of 18 United Nations entities was hosted by WMO in Geneva on 28 and 29 January 2014. At the meeting, which was co-chaired by UNEP and WFP, participants considered the peer review reports of WMO and UNIDO. The final peer review reports, including the peer review report of UNEP, will be submitted to the senior officials of the Environment Management Group at their twentieth meeting in September 2014.